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ABSTRACT

In response to the often-expressed need of preservice teachers for actual teaching experience, a study was conducted to assess the effect of a one-time 15-minute teaching experience on teacher trainees. It was hypothesized that this experience would help them become more concerned with their pupils than with themselves and become more aware of the difficulties involved in teaching while causing minimal disruption of school activities. Each of 23 junior-level students enrolled in this first professional education course taught for 15 minutes in a junior high school class he had never seen before with a cooperating teacher he had just met. The novice teachers were filmed while teaching. They later viewed the films of their own performance and received feedback on their performance from students and cooperating teachers. Reactions of teacher trainees to this experience indicated greater respect for the teaching profession and an increased concern with student achievement resulting from their teaching. It was also noted that classes tended to be consistent in their evaluation of the teacher trainee, and that this evaluation usually agreed with that of the cooperating teacher. (RT)

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THE 15-MINUTE "HOUR":
AN EARLY TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Beulah W. Newlove[1]

Prospective teachers beg for something more "practical" in education courses. But often these pleaders do not even know just what they want. They feel very sure that teaching children is the most practical experience of all. They feel that all else they are learning has little relevance to their needs, their problems, or their future as a teacher. Participants in Bruner's recent IDEA Symposium (1) tend to agree: "The first consensus of these new teachers was the need for teacher training programs to provide earlier occasions for experiences with children. Most often participants criticized the fact that the teacher trainees were not allowed to be with children. . . ."

The IDEA Symposium was unique in several ways. Each participant was an elementary teacher who had just completed her fourth month of teaching. Each had graduated from a preparation institution in June, 1967, and had been recommended by the institution as an outstanding graduate. The purpose of the symposium was to create a sample of new teachers who could evaluate their training after they had had the opportunity to apply it in their regular classrooms.

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[1]The writer wishes to acknowledge the contributions of Frances Fuller, Richard Connelly and Meda White and the assistance of Carol Case and Theresa Bown.

Teachers agree that the subtle art of teaching has to be acquired in the classroom by the teacher herself. Notwithstanding their conviction that experience is the only teacher, student teachers, looking on from outside, are lavish critics of experienced teachers. Experienced teachers, in turn, chafe under criticism from novices who have not learned even when to react to certain behavior and when to ignore it. An experienced teacher responded to a neophyte's criticism in a tape recorded interview: "I think you should give teachers in training a chance to be in the same situation as you are as early as you can so that they stand in the place that you stand, rather than as outsiders or observers of the situation."

Nothing changes an observer's perception of the teacher's task so quickly as giving the observer the task he so easily evaluates.

McPhie (8) points out that students may think that, just because they have been in the public schools a good portion of their lives, they know all there is to know about the schools and teaching. The vast difference between sitting in the student's desk (whether as pupil, college student, or psychologist), and standing before public school pupils as their teacher is seldom, if ever, appreciated by the student teacher in an observing (as opposed to a participating) role.

Before teaching experience, many neophytes are childishly self-centered and identify more with the children they are preparing to teach than with adults and the teaching tasks. This conclusion is supported by the research of Fuller (2) regarding perceived problems and concerns of teachers. Fuller reports that beginning teachers are concerned primarily about themselves (self-concerned) and only later become concerned about pupils and pupil progress (pupil-concerned). In fact, before the teacher-to-be has any actual classroom experience (which may not occur prior to "student teaching" in the senior year), he or she often has <u>no definite professional concerns at all</u> --

only the usual adolescent concerns plus a few nebulous apprehensions or abstract notions about what teaching may be like. Fuller concluded that even early teaching concerns such as concern with one's own adequacy as a teacher are only aroused by a real teaching experience. She continues, "When teaching starts, teachers ask themselves, 'Where do I stand?,' 'How adequate am I?'" In short, the teacher's concerns are still self concerns. Fuller suggests that student teachers must work through some early self-centered concerns before they can become really concerned about learning to teach. In addition, the working through of some of these early concerns facilitates the student teacher's ability to understand and utilize much of the content being offered to her in her own educational program. An interesting finding emerged from further research by Fuller and others (3) at The University of Texas. One freshman education course was labelled completely useless by well over 90 per cent of all the student teachers seen in confidential post student-teaching interviews, but it was judged brilliant, enlightening, and also very helpful by a selected subsample. The subsample was composed of student teachers over 35: retired men, foreign students, musicians, housewives, and other mature persons returning to college for certification. The context of the interviews indicated that the young, inexperienced majority of student teachers was uninterested, at the time in their preparation, in the questions the course was designed to answer. Their concerns were much more self-centered and thus the material of the course, which focused on the components of teaching behavior and relationships with children in the classroom, was irrelevant to them. It would seem, then, that the sooner these young teachers become involved with actual teaching, the sooner much of their educational course content becomes relevant to them. The sooner education majors actually teach, the sooner they will begin developing professional concerns that ultimately will include a concern about children and learning to

teach them. Standing before a class and viewing a sea of faces looking to the "teacher" cannot fail to arouse realistic concerns within the student even though he (the "teacher") may be too overwhelmed to see individuals. Documentation is hardly needed for one to conclude that talking <u>about</u> children in a classroom or observing someone else who is <u>responsible</u> for what goes on in the classroom fails to arouse within the university student the same concerns or feelings that actually standing in the teacher's shoes arouses. Prospective teachers need to stand in those shoes early in their teacher training program; they need to know how it feels to join the adults as a teacher.

Despite all the advantages of actual teaching experience early in the student's training, the fact remains that teacher education institutions often have difficulty in placing their students in public schools. Many schools are already crowded with student teachers, observers, teacher aides, supervisors, school psychology interns, and others. Regardless of how valuable these people may be to the school, the faculty lounges have only so many chairs. In addition, principals, for personal and professional reasons, may wish to limit additional projects.

The central administration of the public school sets overall policies, but often it is the principal who asks for fewer interruptions in the school routine. University supervisors of student teachers are often already overextended and would like more help with student teaching supervising rather than see time and money diverted to new undertakings, involving additional teaching experience occurring earlier in training. Some supervisors resent what they feel to be an invasion on their territory. Finally, in addition to the planning which is necessary to profitably involve still another adult in a classroom, many classroom teachers want to be alone with "their children" at least part of the time. More often cooperating teachers and principals are not willing to add planning hours to their already overcrowded

day. Although there is no completely effortless way to arrange for this early, public school teaching experience, certain procedures yield maximum benefit from a minimal investment of time and effort. In a pilot program, the Research and Development Center for Teacher Education at The University of Texas at Austin carried out such a plan.

This article describes a way of providing neophytes with the "practical" approach they request, and describes how to accomplish this brief early teaching experience in schools with a minimum of inconvenience to the schools. The concerns and reactions of those involved in the pilot program (the teachers-in-training, public school personnel, and the junior high school pupils) are reviewed. The reader will observe that not all techniques and measures described in this article are mandatory in order to provide an early experience in the school. However, some feedback that focuses on the concerns aroused by the teaching experience seems clearly indicated. We have found counseling with test data and films as stimulus to be beneficial. Fuller et al, (3).

Procedures

Twenty-three junior-level education students, who were enrolled in their first professional course, volunteered for an experiment that would give them "earlier experiences in the classroom." Each taught 15 minutes in an eighth or ninth grade English Class. They taught children they had not seen before, in a strange school, and in the room of a volunteering cooperating teacher whom they did not know. Three trainees taught during each class period. Since each cooperating teacher taught four classes with different children in each class, one cooperating teacher initiated 12 trainees in only four one-hour periods. The pupils evaluated their 15-minute teachers orally and on a written instrument, the Pupil Observation Survey Report developed by Veldman and Peck (9). The Pupil Observation Survey Report

(POSR) is a 38-item questionnaire presenting a four-point scale of agreement after each statement; all statements are phrased positively and attempt to measure (1) pupils' reactions to the student teacher and (2) behavioral characteristics of the student teacher. On the day following the 15-minute teaching, the regular teacher and the counselor working together with each class asked the children to evaluate their three "15-minute teachers" orally. The children were encouraged to be honest but respectful.

In addition, the trainees were sound filmed while teaching. Later they received feedback about their teaching. This feedback included a psychological test interpretation as well as counseling with their teaching films used as a stimulus for this counseling (4). The test interpretation was an hour-long interview in which the counselor kept in mind her impressions from the analysis of tests taken by the novice teacher. The counselor shared these impressions with the teacher and solicited the teacher's reaction to them. If the teacher continued to talk about herself, the counselor did not interrupt her in order to "interpret the tests" but used her knowledge of the tests to respond to the concerns of the young teacher. She explored the novice teacher's feelings and/or her way of dealing with others. In some cases a trainee, after taking the lead and exploring her concerns with the counselor for the entire hour, would not realize she had had her test interpretation.

In the film feedback session, the 15-minute teacher viewed her teaching with two people; the writer who had experience as a counselor and as a teacher and with a psychologist who had taught in high school. As with the test interpretation, the purpose was to give the junior teacher an opportunity to understand herself better -- this time to see and to respond to her behavior on film. The primary focus of attention was on the concerns of the junior teacher, rather than on the concerns of those who viewed her teaching with her. The film feedback session

provided an opportunity to clarify the teacher's feelings and reactions about herself and to help her better define or articulate her feelings. In conjunction with the teacher's own reaction to her behavior, the other participants gave their reactions in terms of how they saw the student teacher as a person, i.e., how her filmed behavior exemplified her unique strengths and limitations as she interacted with the children. The intensity and the level of the interpretative reaction varied with the subject's ability to integrate and utilize the information. The rationale and research related to these procedures are described more fully elsewhere. Fuller, et al, (4).

Persons most active in the project were the public school cooperating teachers, their pupils, the writer, two cameramen, the two recorders, the educational psychology instructor of the teachers-in-training, and a psychologist who helped with film feedback. Public school time totaled eight class hours plus two hours of planning. However, the 23 teacher trainees spent considerable time, for they planned extensively, if perhaps frantically and in fear and trembling. Their loose mandate was to explain how to construct a paragraph, adapting the lesson to the achievement level of the class to be taught. They were permitted to use, as examples, paragraphs from their own area of specialization: social studies, science, English literature, and so forth. The only math major in the group was allowed to teach a math lesson to an English class.

Some help to the junior teachers was available from the writer, who also coordinated the program. However, the fledglings were encouraged to use their own initiative and to solicit help from other would-be teachers and their respective cheering sections made up of their college friends. Several said that it was those friends who urged them not to "chicken out."

Those considering following a similar plan should be reminded that it is important that the teachers in training, their professor, and the cooperating teachers in the school welcome the

experience. Cooperating teachers must be glad to have "new blood" in their classrooms. The principal should fully understand the limitations of the neophytes and appreciate the opportunity for children to relate to the young teachers. The good feeling of the professor from whose university or college class the student teachers are taken is also essential. Even though he need not take responsibility for the accomplishment of the project, he must be willing to give one class period for the coordinator to talk with the students about the plan for their teaching. On a couple of other occasions, he must allow time for passing out tentative and final teaching schedules. The coordinator of such a project should be able to plan or suggest some "spot" teaching which will fit into the curriculum "where the students are" even though it should be a separate enrichment experience rather than a continuation of what the regular teacher is doing. He should be present during the teaching, and willing to teach himself if needed. It is not always wise to expect the cooperating teacher who has released her class to step in and fill a 15-minute gap. Finally, it is important that the teachers-in-training have an opportunity to talk about their experiences. This could be done individually or the "teachers" might talk in their university class about what it meant to them to face 30 public school pupils. Filming, test interpretation and the evaluation by public school children were important to the subjects and also useful in our research. However, the main purpose of the 15-minute "hour" was to arouse teaching-related concerns in order that the young teacher could proceed more rapidly to resolve them.

Questions

The project was designed mainly to answer two questions: (1) Can such a brief episode of teaching answer the teacher-in-training's plea for something relevant? (2) Can a large number of students be inducted into teaching with a minimum of bother

to the public schools? Other questions raised were: Will pupils and professional personnel agree on evaluations of teachers? Does brief teaching arouse teaching-related concerns? In answer to the first question, recent research by Lundy and Hale (7) found student teachers to react quite positively to similarly brief episodes of teaching in public schools. Working with higher level students, who were near the end of preparation, Lundy and Hale initiated their students into the public schools by letting them actually teach the whole class the first time they were there. Lundy and Hale reported that a high percentage of student teachers strongly preferred this method of being introduced to the public schools. They enjoyed their equality with the cooperating teacher and the freedom to try out new things. The authors of the study compare this positive reaction to sudden induction with the usual student reaction to the conventional induction, which involves first a long period of observing, followed by being a teacher's aide, then working with small groups of pupils and only toward the end actually teaching the class as a whole. They state:

> In contrast, there is feedback from students in conventional programs that indicates that (1) they are bored or dissatisfied with the early phases of their experiences; (2) there is difficulty in getting started from someone else's home base; (3) it is difficult to establish their own authority and adequacy; (4) most time and energy are diverted to finding what it is the supervising teacher wants; (5) erosion of idealism occurs under tension between practice versus ideal considerations when students are urged by experienced teachers to "do it this way." (6:397)

Our research and that of Lundy and Hale are not identical, since they worked with higher level students and since their students had repeated episodes of brief teaching while our students had only one such episode. Is one episode alone enough to do any good? Available evidence as reported later seems to indicate that it is.

Some answers to question 3 are suggested by Table 1.

TABLE 1

RATINGS OF TEACHING BY COUNSELOR, FILM RATER AND PUPILS ON FRIENDLINESS (SCALE 1) AND COMPETENCY (SCALE 2)

	Film Rater	Pupils	Counselor
Film Rater		.507*	.357
Pupils	-.050	Scale 1 / Scale 2	.835**
Counselor	.256	.549**	

* = .05 level
** = .01 level

Although in this study the pupils' responses on the POSR are based only on a short period of classroom observation, they do represent the pooling of idiosyncratic biases of a large number of judges. The writer, the junior high school students and a research associate rated all junior teachers in this study on the two variables, (1) friendliness and (2) competency. The students based their responses on their reaction to the 15-minute teaching of the novice teachers; the research associate based her ratings on viewing the films of those teaching periods; and the writer based her ratings on observation of the teaching, the test interpretation, and the film feedback sessions.

The pupils and the counselor agreed very well on both facets of the ratings. The agreement between counselor and film rater was positive but weak. Pupils agreed with the film rater significantly with regard to friendliness but not at all with regard to competency.

Goldman (5) reports significant changes in attitude toward teaching and change in attitude toward self following an early teaching experience of elementary education majors in a classroom experience prior to their student teaching and, in fact, prior to enrolling in professional education courses.

A research associate rated the concerns expressed by each teacher-in-training in a tape-recorded interview that was conducted immediately after each teacher viewed her teaching with a counselor. As was predicted, the concerns about pupils was often precipitated by the counselor. For example after the question, "How do you think the pupils felt during the lesson?," the teacher was judged to be concerned with pupils if she continued to focus on pupils or returned later to focus on her concern about pupils. If she continued to talk about her own appearance or voice, she was rated as being primarily concerned about self.

The ratings of statements of subjects in this study suggested that these 15-minute teachers had teaching-related concerns. They did not express the concerns expected of experienced teachers but their concerns were expressed as realities of teaching rather than some nebulus concerns or undifferentiated worries, Fuller (2). They were concerned about their adequacy, their relationship with children, and their ability to teach them. As was expected, these concerns were those of novices, concerned primarily with their role as teacher and secondarily with children.

Reaction of the Novice Teacher to the 15-Minute "Hour"

Judging by their responses, most of these "15-minute teachers" identified with the regular teacher in a different way following their brief experience. One said during film feedback:

> I used to criticize unmercifully the bad teachers I had, and I'm still quite sure I had some old fools -- some really bad teachers. But then you think of the responsibilities of the teacher, and I'm not nearly so critical of them now.

She paused, and then said:

> You know, when I was teaching, Jimmy didn't respond verbally and didn't write anything on his paper but his name. I would like to think of some way to get him to respond. He's not stupid, for if he were he wouldn't be able to write his signature as beautifully as he did. I think that someone who can write like that has some potential.

Even though we may question the logic of her evaluation of Jimmy's potential, no one can doubt the focus of her concern. She was concerned with Jimmy! This novice teacher had more mature concerns than were usually generated by the brief teaching experience. However, some teaching concerns seem to be aroused almost instantly once the "teacher" feels the pressure of 30 faces looking to her for direction. The comments of the trainees reflected their concerns. One novice teacher deplored the boredom of the children during her teaching. Another fretted because she didn't give the children time to deal with the questions she raised. Still another was distressed that she could not make the children understand her directions. Looking at herself on film, she saw and heard herself ask three times, "Do you understand?" After large numbers of the class responded in the negative for the third time, she replied, still friendly but desperate, "Well, why don't you play like you do?"

The reactions of these teachers-in-training were legion. After teaching, some of the novice teachers were so interested that they wanted to learn more about "their" pupils whom they had never seen before. Their teaching seemed real. It put them on the other side of the teacher's desk. They were surprised that "teaching is a lot of work." One novice teacher was amazed to see herself <u>talking to herself</u>! Another felt she knew better than before the difference between a good teacher and a bad teacher. Still another thought the experience was "unreal": "I felt more like a little girl dressing up in adult clothes." One said she was so over-organized that if she had heard a comment from a student -- regardless of what he said -- she

would have picked up her lecture right where she left off. One confessed that, when she saw some of the students looking at the ceiling and looking bored, she could have "wrung their necks." She ended with: "How do I get them fired up?" Following the experience, one thought she would rather teach younger children while another had some doubts about teaching at all. Still another was impervious to suggestions regarding some possible limitations. She felt she taught well and that the children liked her; when the replies of the pupils on the POSR were analyzed, it was found that she was mistaken. One teacher asked, "What do you do with a boy like Tim?" Several were surprised and pleased to become acquainted with university faculty. One said, "I don't seek out my professors so this is a new experience." When asked what concerned her as an undergraduate teacher-in-training, one of the 15-minute teachers summed up her concerns as follows:

> It scares me because you are just going to mold their future . . . ah to a certain extent. It is so important. Seeing all those little faces and realizing that they were really interested in what you had to say. A teacher can influence a child, positively, and it is so important. You cannot save a lot of children but you can certainly head them in the right direction if you will just take the time to see. I had never put myself in a teacher's position. I would always sit in class and yawn or feel bored and it makes you stop and think. And those of us who taught for 15 minutes were saying afterward that we always thought teachers came in and knew what they were doing and had everything organized but, after we taught, we thought -- boy -- the teachers are the ones that are scared you know, because they are not too sure, well they are sure, but they need the children behind them too. It's really a job. I didn't realize that teaching is so much.

Reactions of School Personnel to the 15-Minute "Hour"

Suggestions on the experiment were requested from the public school people. They felt that the school calendar should be carefully studied before setting a date for the teaching, e.g.,

that the ends of the usual six-week grading periods should be avoided. They approved of a lesson independent of the regular classroom unit of teaching. They expressed their appreciation of the minimal planning time required of the regular teachers. They liked being consulted and asked for suggestions but felt that it was wise to have the coordination of the program and the planning of the lesson done by others, with the participation of the regular teacher being limited to giving up her class for the necessary time. One teacher said, "The material and approach of the different junior teachers were wonderful for me because of the varied examples my students can have. And I learned from the young teachers myself. This fresh blood was wonderful." Another said, "I was very impressed with the preparation."

The principal of the school selected expressed a positive attitude toward the training experiment. He commented, "Whether you believe it or not, it's real to the person getting up for the first time in front of a classroom. There is a certain amount of fright there that won't be there the next time they get up." He felt that the students in the experimental classrooms gained because they were "on their toes as much as the young teachers." In regard to possible disruption of the operation of the school, the vice-principal said, "I think there were a lot of students and teachers in the building who didn't even know that the teachers-in-training were here and I think that is good. As far as disruption in our regular routine is concerned, I would say that it was negligible, just none." One of the teachers summed up the reaction of the school people, "The pupils were in no way hurt; they were helped a great deal."

Reactions of the Pupils to the 15-Minute "Hour"

When the pupils were requested to evaluate the three teachers who taught them, on the day after the teaching, their teachers were surprised at how well the pupils recalled the junior teachers. They were able to remember each one as an individual and appeared quite consistent (as a class) in their evaluations. The oral responses made by the students were tape recorded and are

quoted here verbatim. Each excerpt applies to a single student teacher with several students commenting in each case.

> She talked too fast. Her voice was a little low. She seemed nice but scared of the class. She knew just what the book tells. It was hard to understand her way in the back of the room. She seemed like someone in the army who wanted to go like the book -- didn't ad lib any.
>
> She talked real casual like. Like an old pro. You'd give her an idea and she'd discuss with you ways it could be right. She didn't just cut you off. She didn't just say flat, 'You're wrong.' Gave you time to answer. She pointed out the good ideas. She'd ask a question aay about the South and she'd kinda pick it up if nobody answered.
>
> It didn't appear that she was nervous but you could see her legs shake. She was always smiling and I liked that but it made me nervous because she was shaking. You have to think about how she felt. She didn't rush you. I think she will be a good teacher, not nervous because she won't have cameras or anything. When someone brought out something she wasn't harsh about it.
>
> Her voice was high like on a kiddie show. She talked at us, a one sided conversation. Miss P's eyes were probably never focused on the class. Didn't seem to talk in a real normal way. It wasn't exactly spontaneous. More like what you'd do on a stage. Rehearsed exactly. But her material was well organized. She was just a little too eager, too sweet.

On the back of the written evaluation (POSR) one boy's penciled comment about this last teacher was: "Nobody is actually that good, I'm sure at the University they taught aome sort of child psychology and they say, 'when you ask a question of a child, seem interested.' She was too interested, she went like this when she asked a question." He then sketched a side view of this teacher leaning far over the desk and looking at the class intently.

Summary and Conclusions

The primary purpose of the study was to meet the often-expressed need of preservice teachers for actual teaching experience. Implicit in the study was the opinion that such experience would motivate the teachers to focus on the task of

teaching, to be concerned about their behavior in a classroom. Twenty-three University junior-level students enrolled in their first professional education course each taught for 15 minutes in a junior high school. Each taught a class she had never seen before with a cooperating teacher she had just met. These novice teachers were filmed while teaching and later received feedback about their teaching.

The study also provided an opportunity to train two psychologists in two new teacher-counseling techniques, psychological test interpretation, and film feedback. In addition, the results of the children's appraisal of their young teachers, on the Pupil Observation Survey Report, were used as data in a larger study involving the interaction of pupil and teacher social class (6).

The procedures were well accepted by the school. The children were exposed to new ideas and to new personalities. The cooperating teachers gained new ideas from the junior teachers and believed the experience was beneficial for them and the children. The children evaluated the teachers-in-training verbally and in writing, and their opinions provided vivid feedback for these teachers.

The novice teachers who taught had a tremendous variety of reactions ranging from "inspired" and "complete resolution of doubts about teaching" to shock at the revelation that teaching is for the mature only and that, in order to become a teacher, it is necessary to "join" the adult world. In some cases "becoming an adult" almost constituted "going over to the enemy!" For all, it was a new and vividly personal -- even shockingly personal -- revelation about their potentialities and limitations as teachers.

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This pilot study involving fifteen minutes of teaching in a public school could not have been accomplished without the professional and personal involvement of a number of people.

It would be impossible to acknowledge the contributions of all those persons who contributed. In Porter Junior High School over two hundred pupils evaluated the teachers in training. Cooperating teachers, Glenda Nixon and Jo Ann Weeks, created a climate in which the teaching by novices was greatly facilitated. Principals, M.R. Davis and Floyd Travis, cheerfully gave their help and support. From the University, Judy Blanton gave time from her course in Educational Psychology in order that her students could teach. Dr. W.A. Bennie observed some of the teaching in the schools and on film.

Andy Prather filmed the teaching while Sheila Whitesides and Judy Garrard recorded what went on out of the range of the camera. Theresa Bown listened to film feedback sessions and rated the concerns talked about by the teachers after they saw themselves on film. Carol Case rated the teachers on friendliness and competency from their filmed teaching.

Dr. Oliver H. Bown gave the first film feedback for training purposes. Dr. Richard Connelly participated in test interpretations and film feedback sessions. Mrs. Meda White and Dr. Shirley Menaker made editorial contributions.

Dr. Frances Fuller contributed to this article editorially and to the study of the concerns of the 15-minute teachers.

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